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Tim Horton earns top chemistry award at national Alpha Chi convention



By McKenzie Cranford

April 14, 2014

For more information, contact OBU's news bureau at newsbureau@obu.edu or (870) 245-5208.

ARKADELPHIA, Ark. -- Ouachita Baptist University student Tim Horton earned the best presentation in chemistry award at the recent Alpha Chi National Convention in St. Louis, Mo. Horton is a senior chemistry and physics double major from Arkadelphia, Ark., and serves as president of Ouachita's Alpha Chi chapter.

"The conference is a great forum for our top students," said Dr. Lori Hensley, Ouachita's Alpha Chi faculty sponsor. "Alpha Chi emphasizes academic achievement and servant leadership; their convention showcases this and provides an exceptional experience for our students." Hensley also serves as professor of biology and holder of the J.D. Patterson Chair of Biology.

This marked Horton's second year to attend the convention. His award-winning presentation was titled "Inhibiting Recognition of the B-Cell Receptor by the Tyrosine Kinase Syk." He said he hopes his work eventually will lead to treatments for autoimmune diseases.

Although the research he presented was performed at the University of California at Berkeley, Horton said, "It was the training I've received from numerous professors here at Ouachita that prepared me to get the position at Berkeley.

"I feel that the award was an affirmation of the caliber of the science department here at Ouachita," Horton added. "Our professors are willing to prepare you for whatever aspiration you're willing to push towards."

Additionally, Ouachita junior Dustin Walter, a biology and chemistry double major from Marion, Ark., received the \$1,500 Alfred H. Nolle Scholarship. The scholarship selection was based on Walter's research, which involved modifying proteins to see if they could be used to treat fungal diseases.

"It was really exciting to receive the award because I knew it was very competitive," said Walter.

At the convention, Rebekah Ward, a senior biology and chemistry double major from Little Rock, Ark., presented "Identification of Ajulemic Acid Receptors to Investigate the Mechanism of Cell Death in Ewing's Sarcoma." She conducted her research with Dr. Marty Perry, OBU's Nell I. Mondy Professor of Chemistry, and Dr. Lori Hensley, Ouachita's Alpha Chi faculty sponsor as well as associate professor of biology and holder of the J.D. Patterson Chair of Biology.

Crista Riggs, a biology and chemistry double major from Edmond, Okla., also presented at the conference. Her presentation, "LPA Stimulates Ser/Thr-phosphorylation of Argonaute-2 in Hypoxia-Stressed Ovarian Cancer Cells," resulted from research she conducted last summer with the Stephenson Cancer Center in Oklahoma City. She worked with Dr. Danny Dhanasekaren, director of basic cancer research for the University of Oklahoma Health Sciences Center.

Reflecting on her second year attending the convention, Riggs said, "I have definitely improved in my ability to explain research in a way that makes it easily understandable and relevant to society."

"Tim, Crista and Rebekah gave excellent presentations and represented Ouachita very well," added Dr. Hensley.

During the trip, the students also had the opportunity to explore St. Louis and attend other presentations at the convention.

"I loved attending the keynote speakers who motivated students to become aware of global needs and to utilize their talents in meeting such needs," added Ward.

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